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USIB-D-41.12/23  
(COMOR-D-7/51)  
17 August 1966  
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UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

SUBJECT : Recommendations 18(6)(a) and 18(6)(b) of the  
11 July 1966 Report of the NSAM 156 Committee

REFERENCES : a. USIB-D-41.12/21 (COMOR-D-7/48)  
14 July 1966, Limited Distribution  
b. USIB-D-41.12/22 (COMOR-D-7/49)  
29 July 1966, Limited Distribution

1. The Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance (COMOR), meeting as an ad hoc group to study the subject recommendations (circulated to USIB Principals by reference a.) in response to paragraph 8 of reference b., has submitted the attached report for consideration by the United States Intelligence Board (USIB).

2. Recommendations by COMOR for Board action are contained in paragraph 6 of the attached memorandum, along with the footnote thereto on page 6 in which the State Member of COMOR concurs in Recommendation 6 c. but does not concur in Recommendations 6 a. and 6 b. for the reasons set forth in Tab A hereto.

3. The attached report will be scheduled on the agenda of the USIB meeting for 25 August 1966.

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Executive Secretary

Attachment

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GROUP 1  
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State Dept. review completed

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, United States Intelligence Board

SUBJECT: Recommendations 18(6)(a) and 18(6)(b) of the  
11 July 1966 Report of the NSAM 156 Committee

1. COMOR, meeting as an ad hoc group for the purpose of studying recommendations 18(6)(a) and 18(6)(b) of the NSAM 156 Committee's report, has recognized that the intelligence community is facing a rapidly evolving situation in which it must continue to conduct the necessary reconnaissance in support of priority national intelligence requirements. This new situation is created in part by the following:

a. The successful execution over a period of approximately six years of a satellite reconnaissance program that has resulted in repetitive coverage of the entire Sino-Soviet bloc and in at least one-time coverage of over ten and a half million square miles of the earth's surface outside of the Sino-Soviet bloc. The impact of a program of this size is felt far beyond the confines of the intelligence community.

b. The implementation of a large-scale program leading to the establishment of a highly accurate world-wide geodetic net which has resulted in coverage of most of the earth's surface by DAFF photography and other applicable photography taken by the index camera systems of reconnaissance vehicles.

c. The successful acquisition of spectacular photography of large portions of the earth's surface by the NASA GEMINI program operating on a completely unclassified basis.

d. Publication of other unclassified photography of the earth, moon, and Mars as a result of unclassified programs conducted by the United States and the Soviet Union.

e. A considerable increase in interest on the part of other Government departments and agencies, and on the part of the United States scientific community, in the contributions that can be made to scientific and technical problems by the use of earth sensing devices carried in satellite platforms. This interest has led to and has been encouraged by unclassified discussion by NASA of some of the applications that might be considered in a NASA-operated program.

f. The growing awareness that the Soviets are conducting a satellite reconnaissance program.

g. The publication of numerous articles in scientific and technical journals, and in the public press, describing or purporting to describe various aspects of the United States satellite reconnaissance program.

2. Against this background the intelligence community has operated a security system which appears to have been successful in preventing the Soviet Union from adequately assessing the successes achieved by the United States reconnaissance program. The intelligence community has also developed an elaborate set of procedures which has made it possible to use the information obtained by satellite reconnaissance for a wide range of purposes without undue security risk. In view of our success in achieving widespread use of our reconnaissance products while at the same time maintaining essential security, we are reluctant to recommend steps that would increase the security risk to our national reconnaissance program without having a very clear idea of the benefits to be obtained by such an increased risk.

3. Both the State Department representatives and the NASA representatives consulted by COMOR have stated that they would derive considerable benefit in the conduct of their business if they could discuss the fact of reconnaissance at SECRET or TOP SECRET level. It is clear, however, that all of NASA managerial problems in this regard could not be met unless the fact of reconnaissance could be discussed on an unclassified basis. State Department representatives also point out that there is a risk to both the U. S. political position and to the security of the U. S. reconnaissance program as a result of inadvertent error on the part of personnel who are not aware of the fact of our reconnaissance program

or the requirement to keep it secure. The Department's representatives feel that if the necessary U.S. officials could be informed of and could refer to the fact of reconnaissance on a SECRET or TOP SECRET basis, they would be prevented from making these inadvertent mistakes. The State Department's position is supported to some extent by the practice of TALENT Security Officers who warn uncleared intelligence personnel who may have engaged in dangerous speculation concerning the U.S. program. The warning amounts to tacit confirmation of the fact of the existence of a U.S. reconnaissance program.

4. At the present time the Department of State (less ACDA and AID) has a total of 173 personnel who are cleared for [ ] or TALENT-KEYHOLE information and thus have some knowledge of the U.S. satellite reconnaissance program. NASA has a total of 124 cleared for these same categories. Since the admission of the fact of U.S. reconnaissance at the SECRET or TOP SECRET level is an action that cannot be reversed, we believe that it would be advisable first for the State Department and NASA to see if the internal managerial problems causing them to favor the release of this information could be handled by granting an increased number of T-KH clearances to key personnel in their departments. If after an adequate practical test this approach does not solve the problem, we believe that the intelligence community should consider authorizing TALENT Control Officers to brief selected personnel at the TOP SECRET or SECRET level concerning the fact of U.S. reconnaissance. This has already been accomplished in the case of briefings given to [ ] members and certain heads of State.

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5. Recommendation 18(6)(b) concerns the use of T-KH photography by NASA and asks that the problem be examined in terms of the selective removal of appropriate photography from codeword control or, alternatively, clearance of an increased number of NASA personnel in order that they may use the photography under existing codeword controls. In our examination of this problem we have concluded that it is too early to decide the optimum manner for NASA to exploit KH photography. We have concluded instead that the problem should be approached on a step-by-step basis and that the nature of the final step should be determined at a later date on the basis of experience acquired in the completion of the intervening steps. We can foresee at least the following at this time:

a. Clearance of a panel of personnel, selected by NASA, representing all of the various disciplines of interest to NASA, this panel to be thoroughly briefed in the material now under codeword control and on the various exploitation efforts currently being employed by cleared personnel.

b. If after Step No. 1, NASA and the intelligence community conclude it to be desirable, Step No. 2 would be the establishment of a TALENT-KEYHOLE center at NASA headquarters and possibly at the NASA Manned Spacecraft Center at Houston. This would permit NASA to receive its own copy of reconnaissance materials collected within the KEYHOLE system and would enable them to request the clearance of additional numbers of personnel to study the products and to become thoroughly familiar with both the products and exploitation procedures under codeword control to determine if further exploitation by NASA is desirable or feasible.

c. Step No. 3, the exact nature of which cannot be determined at this time, would be developed on the basis of experience required under Steps 1 and 2 above and might include the development of procedures for the sanitization, decontrol, downgrading, or declassification of certain types of KEYHOLE material, the actual sanitization or downgrading to be accomplished by NASA within the TALENT-KEYHOLE centers established under Step No. 2 above as approved by the DCI.\*

6.\*\* Recommendation. It is recommended that:

a.\*\* To meet the recommendation in NSAM 156, 18(6)(a), the Department of State and NASA select an increased

\*It should be recognized that any relaxation of strict security controls to accommodate NASA would also apply to other Government agencies who have similar needs for wider use of reconnaissance products.

\*\*See footnote on following page.

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number of key personnel for clearance in the TALENT-KEYHOLE system to see if the risk of uninformed discussion can be controlled by this means.

b.\* COMOR review the situation at the end of six months to determine whether the problem has been solved or whether there should be a briefing of additional persons at the TOP SECRET or SECRET level.

c.\* To meet the recommendation in NSAM 156, 18(6)(b), NASA be invited to select a panel representing those scientific and technical disciplines of interest to NASA to be cleared for access to TALENT-KEYHOLE information in order that they may study current TALENT-KEYHOLE materials at NPIC and exploitation procedures used by NPIC, the Mapping, Charting, and Geodesy community, etc., and make recommendations to NASA concerning the desirability of increased NASA participation in the TALENT-KEYHOLE program.

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Chairman

Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance

\*The State Member concurs in recommendation 6c as a means of providing further clarification of NASA needs and closer coordination with the intelligence community. He agrees to this first step without prejudice to the Department's previously stated position concerning the selective decontrol of satellite reconnaissance products. For reasons set forth in Tab A, the State Member does not concur in recommendations 6a and 6b, believing that removal of the fact of a U.S. satellite reconnaissance program from codeword control would enhance our political and security interests.

Attachment:  
Tab A

Department of State Comment on  
Recommendation 6a of NSAM 156 Committee Report

The State Member believes it is increasingly clear that the system is diverging from its original purpose, and that the divergence is likely to grow in the next five years or so.

At the time of the September 1960 Presidential Directive there was a critical need to hold very closely all evidence of the operation and the product in order to conceal the existence of the program. At that time the U-2 incident was still fresh, and it was prudent to impose elaborate controls over products in order to keep the fact that the program was getting under way from becoming another international cause celebre. At the time the U.S. was concerned lest any revelation of the fact of a satellite reconnaissance program lead to Soviet efforts 1) at interference, 2) at camouflage, or 3) to use it to bring pressure on the U.S. to desist or to embarrass the U.S. at international forums. Thus, the objective of the elaborate measures begun in 1960 was to exercise careful control over the knowledge of the fact of satellite reconnaissance in order to prevent leaks and premature disclosures from interfering with a long range goal of getting the Soviets to accept satellite reconnaissance as a fact of life, and ultimately as a legitimate and perfectly legal activity.

Thus, the original purpose for elaborate control of the fact that the program existed was to protect the program from adverse foreign, and especially Soviet, reaction. Today that purpose would be better served by a far less restrictive classification on the fact that the program exists. The danger today is not of clandestine compromise of the simple fact of space reconnaissance, but of ill-considered public statements. The Soviets know we have a program; no one is concealing the fact from Brezhnev or from the readers of his speeches. It is important to protect the program from public statements which could elicit adverse foreign reactions or generate pressures for disclosure of detailed information.

A large and growing number of American officials who are not privy to the T-KH system know or can very reasonably infer that there is an American satellite reconnaissance program. What they do not know is that they are not supposed to talk about it, and they may not understand how considerations arising from that program bear upon their own work.

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Tab A

One suggestion mentioned at the COMOR meeting was to clear many more people. This seems imprudent, and even self-defeating to the purpose of compartmentalization. Many of the people in the increasing number of civilian agencies which are developing an interest in satellite photography do not have a need to know the highly sensitive aspects of the T-KH system. And some may for a variety of reasons not qualify for clearance to T-KH materials.

It seems much more logical to adjust the classification to meet the needs. Namely, the State Member suggests a SECRET classification for these three propositions: 1) the U.S. has a classified satellite reconnaissance program, 2) because this program is a valuable national security asset, details are kept highly classified and are not available to personnel without special clearances, and 3) it is a matter of national policy that the subject of satellite reconnaissance not be discussed in public by American officials.

Another suggestion made at the COMOR meeting was for a sort of junior T-KH clearance, consisting of a statement about the fact that the program exists, to be read to individuals whose names would be recorded. Upon reflection, we are convinced that this would be needlessly restrictive. We believe that it would be much more useful to permit reference to the existence of the American program to appear in classified papers as required. This will be useful here in State as well as in other agencies where considerations of how certain programs or policies may touch upon the reconnaissance program will have to be reviewed. We believe that clarity in internal government papers at the SECRET level will be extremely useful in assuring that the national interest in the reconnaissance is borne in mind by those who might otherwise neglect that consideration. The fact of satellite reconnaissance is already known at the SECRET level; the State Member believes that we are not contributing materially to security by keeping specific reference to the existence of a U.S. program from being made at that level, so much as we are risking muddling questions on which we have the greatest interest in clarity.